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Tafseer Soorah Al-Hujurât

تفسير سورة الحجرات

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

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Directory of Symbols

(ﷲ): *Subhânahu wa Ta'âla* — 'The Exalted'

(ﷺ): *Şallâ-Allâhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam* — 'Blessings and
Peace be upon him'

(ﷺ): *'Alayhis-Salâm* — 'May peace be upon him'

(ﷻ): *Raḍia Allâhu 'Anhu* — 'May Allah be pleased with him'

(ﷻ): *Raḍia Allâhu 'Anhâ* — 'May Allah be pleased with her'

Foreword: Second Edition

*Al-Ḥamdulillâh*¹, since the initial publication of *Tafseer of Soorah al-Hujurât* in March of 1989, the public response has been quite overwhelming. The first edition went out of print within a year and the demand for copies has been steadily increasing. Consequently, it became obvious that a second print was in order. However, rather than merely doing a reprint of the first edition, I have endeavoured to make the second printing an improvement on the first.

As is to be expected, some of the changes in the second edition have been cosmetic. Such is the case of the new cover design and the use of vowelized Qur'anic verses within the text. But, other modifications have been substantial, as in the case of the referencing of the majority of Hadiths to available English translations of the books of Hadiths, most of which was done by brother Iftekhar Mackeen. This was done to enable the English reader to easily check the Hadith references mentioned within the text for confirmation of their authenticity and for further reading on the subject.

It is worth mentioning here that a number of request have been made for my book, *Uṣool at-Tafseer*, mentioned in the foreword of the first edition of this *Tafseer*. Unfortunately, to date, the book has remained an unpublished manuscript.² I decided not to publish it at that time since a similar work entitled, '*Uloom al-Qur'an*', had

¹ Praise be to Allah.

² This book is now published and is in circulation. This note was written prior to its publication. (IIPH)

study under other *Ṣaḥābah* while others stayed with their teachers until their death.

Schools of Tafseer

The most notable centres of *Tafseer* which evolved during this period were those of Makkah, Madeenah and Iraq. In Makkah, the *Tafseer* school of Ibn 'Abbās became the most prominent. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās was himself considered the greatest *Tafseer* scholar among the *Ṣaḥābah*. He reported that once the Prophet (ﷺ) embraced him and prayed for him as follows, «O' Allah! Give him a deep understanding of the religion and make him skilled in interpretation.»⁴

In spite of Ibn 'Abbās' youth, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have conferred on him the title "*Turjumân al-Qur'an*"⁵. The most famous students of Ibn 'Abbās were Mujāhid ibn Jabr, 'Ikrimah (the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbās), Sa'eed ibn Jubayr, Ṭâwoos ibn Keesân al-Yamâni and 'Aṭâ ibn Abi Rabâḥ.⁶

In Madeenah, the most noted school of *Tafseer* was that of Ubayy ibn Ka'b (رضي الله عنه) who was considered by most of his contemporaries as the top reciter of the Qur'an.⁷ Ubayy was also the first chosen by the Prophet (ﷺ) to record the revelation of the Qur'an. And the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said to him, «Verily, Allah, the Most Great, Most Glorious has commanded me to recite to you, '*Lam yakunil-ladheena Kafaroo*', i.e. *Soorah al-Bayinah*. When

⁴ Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 106, hadith no. 10 and Muslim, vol. 4, Pp. 1320-1321, hadith no. 6055.

⁵ Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 64, hadith no. 75 and vol. 5, p. 69, hadith no. 100-101.

⁶ *Al-Itqân fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 242. It is also interesting to note that all of these great scholars were former slaves.

⁷ Ibn Hajar, *al-Isâba fee Tamyeez aṣ-Ṣaḥābah*, vol. 1, p. 26.

Ubayy asked if Allah had mentioned his name to him, the Prophet (ﷺ) answered in the affirmative and Ubayy (رضي الله عنه) wept.»⁸

Ubayy's most notable students were Zayd ibn Aslam, Abu al-'Āliyah and Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Quradhi.⁹

In Kufa (Iraq) Ibn Mas'ood headed the most prominent school of *Tafseer*. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, the sixth person to enter Islam,¹⁰ was among the top reciters of the Qur'an. The Prophet (ﷺ) himself praised his recitation saying, «Whoever wishes to recite the Qur'an in the tender manner in which it was revealed, should recite it as Ibn Umm 'Abd — Ibn Mas'ood — does.»¹¹

As for his knowledge of *Tafseer*, Ibn Mas'ood said,

“By the One besides whom there is no other god, I know where and why every verse of Allah's book was revealed.”¹²

Among the many students of Ibn Mas'ood who later became scholars in their own right are: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, 'Alqamah ibn Qays, Masrooq, al-Aswad ibn Yazeed and 'Āmir ash-Sha'bi.¹³

Transmission of Tafseer

During this period, *Tafseer* was taught by narration. That is, the *Ṣaḥābah* who headed schools of *Tafseer* would quote the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) which explained the meanings of verses or explained the historical context in which the verses were revealed or

⁸ Bukhari, vol. 5, p. 97, hadith no. 54 and Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1313, hadith no. 6031.

⁹ Mannâ' al-Qattân, *Mabâḥith fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, p. 339.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzi, *Ṣifatuṣ-Ṣafwah*, vol. 1, p. 395.

¹¹ Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad.

¹² Ibn Jareer. See *al-Itqân fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 239.

¹³ Mannâ' al-Qattân, *Mabâḥith fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, p. 339.

also be noted that inspite of the deviation and stagnation which afflicted the field of *Tafseer* as well as all of the Islamic sciences, there were, throughout this period, a smattering of great scholars who held high the banner of pure Islamic thought. Thus it should not be surprising to find that the most highly acclaimed *Tafseer* of all times was produced by a scholar of this time, *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-Adheem* by al-Hâfidh ibn Katheer (d. 1365 C.E.).

In the twentieth century, a new form of *Tafseer* has evolved in which the authors have tried to apply the passages of the Qur'an to the needs of the twentieth century. For example, *Tafseers* like *Tafseer al-Manâr* by Muhammad Rasheed Riḍâ, *Fee Dhillâl al-Qur'an* by Muhammad Quṭb and *Tafheem al-Qur'an* by Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi point out the Qur'anic foundations for human society, legislation and scientific theories.

Tafseer and Ta'weel

The words *Tafseer* and *Ta'weel* were considered synonyms by the early generations of Muslims; however, in the centuries following the era of the *Tâbi'oon* and their students, 9th and 10th centuries, the term *Ta'weeli* took on a new meaning with new and dangerous implications. Consequently, it is necessary for us to look at these terms in their original context as well as their later usage.

The word *Tafseer* from the verb *Fassara* literally means an explanation or an exposition as in the verse:

﴿وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا﴾

(سورة الفرقان: ٣٣)

«For any parable they bring, We will bring you the truth and a better explanation [*Tafseeran*].» (Qur'an 25: 33)

However, in Qur'anic sciences, this term is defined as a branch of knowledge by which the Qur'an is understood, its meanings explained and its point of law and wisdom derived.¹⁹ On the other hand, the word *Ta'weel* comes from the verb *Awwala* and literally means interpretation but it can be used with varying shades of meanings. For example, in compliance to a command, the word *Ta'weel* means its execution or implementation, as in the Hadith reported by 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) in which she said, «Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to implement (*yata-awwal*) the Qur'an by saying *Rukoo'* and *Sujood* — bowing and prostrating during formal prayer: 'Glory be to You O' Allah and Praised are You O' Allah. Forgive me.'»²⁰

She was referring to the Prophet's execution of Allah's command in the verse,

﴿فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا﴾ (سورة النضر: ٣)

«Glorify your Lord and ask His forgiveness, for verily He is Oft Forgiving.» (Qur'an 110: 3)

When *Ta'weel* is used in reference to news or information, it refers to its occurrences as in the verse,

﴿وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (٥٢) هَلْ

يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ... ﴿٥٣﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٥٢-٥٣)

«Verily, We have brought them a book of knowledge and explained it in detail; a guide and a mercy for the believers. Are they only waiting for the occurrence [*Ta'weelahu*] [of what is in the Book]...»

(Qur'an 7: 52-53)

¹⁹ As-Suyooti, *al-Itqân fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 174.

²⁰ Bukhari, vol. 6, p. 464, hadith no. 492 and Muslim, vol. 1, Pp. 254-255, hadith no. 981.

further clarified their meanings. However, the *Tafseer* transmitted from the Prophet (ﷺ) and the *Şahâbah* did not cover all of the verses of the Qur'an. The Prophet (ﷺ) explained only what was unclear to the *Şahâbah* and they in turn only explained only what was unclear to the *Tâbi'oon*. But, with each succeeding generation, more areas became unclear due to the evolution of the language. Hence, the *Tâbi'oon* had to make further explanations after the passing of the *Şahâbah's* era. These explanations are considered a part of *Tafseer* by *Âthâr* and should be given precedence over personal opinions. If they differed, none of their opinions need be given preference over the others unless it is supported by the language. During the era of the *Tâbi'oon* many Christians and Jews became Muslim. As a result, some of the *Tâbi'oon* narrated tales from Jewish and Christian sources in their explanation of the Qur'an. Such narrations became known as *Isrâ'îliyât*. In later generations the books of *Tafseer* became filled with such narrations many of which could not be traced to any reliable source.

4. Tafseer of the Qur'an by language

With the passage of time words took on new meanings and old meanings became lost, foreign words entered into the language and vast sections of vocabulary fell into disuse. This natural process necessitated the explanation of some of the Qur'anic verses according to their literal and logical meanings. Consequently, this period witnessed the appearance of dictionaries like *Mukhtâr aş-Şihâh*²⁹ written specifically to deal with Qur'anic Arabic vocabulary and philology. In cases where words had more than one meaning, this step created differences of opinion which could only be solved by finding some support in the Sunnah. For example the word, *Lams*

²⁹ Compiled by Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ar-Râzi.

literally means to touch but figuratively it means sexual intercourse, thus, Muslim scholars were of two basic opinions concerning the following verse,

﴿... أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا ...﴾ (٤٣)

(سورة النساء: ٤٣)

﴿... or you touch [lâmastum] women and can not find water, then make *Tayammum* [ritual purification with clean dust].﴾ (Qur'an 4: 43)

Imams ash-Shâfi'i and Mâlik held that it meant the touch of the hand, though each Imam ash-Shâfi'i and Mâlik held that it meant the touch of the hand, though each Imam added certain stipulations to it. On the other hand, Imam Abu Haneefah ruled that it meant sexual intercourse.³⁰ However, the Prophet's wives reported that on some occasions he kissed them before performing *Şalâh*, which indicates that touching was not intended by this verse.³¹

These four methods come under the general title of *Tafseer bir-Riwâyah* or *Tafseer bil-Ma'thoor* (*Tafseer* based on narration) and as such leave little room for argument. Although the fourth step is often times based on narration from earlier generations, at other times it can be highly opinionated and controversial. For example, Yusuf 'Ali openly translates the word "*Burooj*" used in the 85th Chapter (*Soorah al-Burooj*) as "the Zodiacal signs"³² while Pickthall translates it as "Mansions of the Stars" but says in his introduction to the *Soorah* that it is applied to the signs of the zodiac.³³ Thus, according to them, Allah is making an oath by the zodiacal signs.

³⁰ *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Adheem*, vol. 1, p. 760.

³¹ Ibid, p. 762, The hadith is reported by 'Â'ishah and collected by Abu Dawood, vol. 1, p. 43, hadith no. 179, Tirmidhi, Ibn Mâjah and Aḥmad.

³² A. Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, p. 714.

³³ Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, p. 435.

Dialects and Recitations

Although Arabic was the common language throughout the Arabian peninsula, the different environments and histories of the various tribes produced a wide variety of dialects. In some cases each tribe used different words to describe the same object. For example, some tribes called the lion an "Asad" while other tribes called it a "layth", "Hamzah", "Hafṣ" or a "Ghaḍanfar". In other cases, differences occurred in the way certain letters were pronounced due to vowelling differences. However, in time the dialect of the tribe of Quraysh emerged from among the various dialects as the most prominent dialect. The Qurayshi dialect became the most respected of all the dialects for the following basic reasons:

1. Makkah and its surrounding area, including the shrine of the Ka'bah, were part of the tribal lands of the Quraysh. Each of the various tribes had idols representing their various tribal gods placed in and around the Ka'bah. Thus the Ka'bah was considered the spiritual centre for all of the Arabian tribes and pilgrimage to the shrine was made throughout the year.
2. During the month of Ḥajj, pilgrims from all of the tribes used to come to Makkah in order to perform the rites of Ḥajj. This practice was started by Prophet Ibraheem and his son Ismâ'eel (may peace be upon them) when they first built the Ka'bah and it remained a practice among their Arabian descendants. However, as time passed, many false rituals involving idolatry and superstition were added to the original rites. The Quraysh took personal responsibility for supplying drinking water for all of the pilgrims and their animals. This was done free of charge as evidence of their generosity and nobility. Thus, the Quraysh were

Qira'at (the Recitations)

A *Qira'ah* is for the most part a method of pronunciation used in the recitations of the Qur'an. These methods are different from the seven forms or modes (*Ahruf*) in which the Qur'an was revealed. The seven modes were reduced to one, that of Quraysh, during the era of Caliph 'Uthmân, and all of the methods of recitation are based on this mode. The various methods have all been traced back to the Prophet (ﷺ) through a number of the *Ṣaḥâbah* who were most noted for their Qur'anic recitations. That is, these *Ṣaḥâbah* recited the Qur'an to the Prophet (ﷺ) or in his presence and received his approval. Among them were the following: Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭâlib, Zayd ibn Thâbit, Ibn Mas'ood, Abu ad-Dardâ and Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with them all). Many of the other *Ṣaḥâbah* learned from these masters. For example, Ibn 'Abbâs, the master commentator of the Qur'an among the *Ṣaḥâbah*, learned from both Ubayy and Zayd.⁷

Among the next generation of Muslims referred to as the *Tâbi'oon*, there arose many scholars who learned the various methods of recitation from the *Ṣaḥâbah* and taught them to others. Centres of the Qur'anic recitation developed in Madeenah, Makkah, Kufa, Baṣrah and Syria, leading to the evolution of Qur'anic recitation into an independent science. By mid-eighth century CE, there existed a large number of outstanding scholars all of whom were considered specialists in the field of recitation. Most of their methods of recitation were authenticated by chains of reliable narrators ending with the Prophet (ﷺ). Those methods which were supported by a large number of reliable narrators on each level of their chain were called *Mutawâtir* and were considered to be the most

accurate. Those methods in which the number of narrators were few or only one on any level of the chain were referred to as *Shâdhah*. Some of the scholars of the following period began the practice of designating a set number of individual scholars from the previous period as being the most noteworthy and accurate. By the middle of the tenth century, the number seven became popular since it coincided with the number of dialects in which the Qur'an was revealed. Similarly, during this period the number of schools of Islamic law (*Madh-habs*) were reduced to the famous four after a period in which there were many. The first to limit the number of authentic reciters to seven was the Iraqi scholar, Abu Bakr ibn Mujâhid (d. 936 CE), and those who wrote books on *Qira'ah* after him followed suit.⁸ This limitation is not an accurate representation of the classical scholars of Qur'anic recitation. There were many others who were as good as the seven and a number who were greater than them. In fact the classification of scholars was really a classification of how well their methods of recitation were preserved. Hence, the famous seven were those early scholars from different generations whose methods of recitation had the most chains of narrators with many narrations on each level of the chain. However, there were other classical scholars whose methods of recitation were just as authentically recorded as the famous seven. A list of the ten scholars of the Qur'anic recitation whose methods were best preserved is as follows:

1. Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Alâ (d. 771 CE) of Baṣrah.
2. Ibn Katheer (d. 738 CE) of Makkah was among the students of the *Ṣaḥâbah*.
3. Nâfi' ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmân (d. 786 CE) of Madeenah was originally from Iṣfahan and his recitation as transmitted by Warsh (d. 812 CE) is the method of recitation commonly used in North and West Africa

⁷ *Mabâḥith fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, p. 170.

⁸ *Mabâḥith fee 'Uloom al-Qur'an*, p. 173.

Soorah al-Hujurât

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious Most Merciful.

1. O' believers, do not be hasty and forward in Allah and His Messenger's presence but instead fear Allah; for verily, Allah is Hearer and Knower.

2. O' believers, do not raise your voice over that of the Prophet's, and do not speak loudly to him the way you do among yourselves, or else your good deeds may be devalued without you realizing it.

3. Surely, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah's Messenger are the ones whom Allah has tested their hearts for *Taqwâ* [piety]. Forgiveness and a great reward will be theirs.

4. Surely, most of those who call out to you from behind the apartments have no sense.

5. And, if only they were patient until you came out to them, it would have been better for them, but Allah is oft forgiving, most merciful.

سُورَةُ الْحَجَرَاتِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَالْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾﴾

٢- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾﴾

٣- ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِندَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلنَّفُورِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾﴾

٤- ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾﴾

٥- ﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾﴾

6. O' believers, if an unrighteous person comes to you with information, you should verify it, or else you might inflict harm on a people in ignorance and then end up regretting what you have done.

7. And, you should realize that Allah's Messenger is among you. If he were to obey you in many of your affairs, you would be in difficulty. But Allah has endeared *Eemân* [faith] to you, beautified it in your hearts, and made *Kufr* [disbelief], sin, and disobedience hateful to you. Those are the rightly guided.

8. A favour and blessing from Allah, and Allah is all knowing and wise.

9. And, if two factions of the believers fight, you should make peace between them. But if one of them continues to do wrong to the other, fight the transgressor until they return to Allah's command. If they then do so, make a just peace between them; for verily, Allah loves the just ones.

10. Verily, the believers are brothers so make peace between your two brothers that perhaps

٦- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَائِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِمِجَالِهِمْ فَتُصِيبُوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ تَوَدُّمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

٧- ﴿وَاعْلَمُوا أَن فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ ﴿٧﴾

٨- ﴿فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةً عَلَيْهِمْ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٨﴾

٩- ﴿وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَلَّتِي تَبْغِي حَقَّ تَقَىٰءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

١٠- ﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

you may receive mercy.

11. O' believers, people should not scorn others for perhaps they may be better than them. Neither should women scorn other women for perhaps they may also be better than them. You should not discredit each other nor abuse each other with nicknames. The worst of titles is that of "Immorality" after that of "Belief", and whoever does not repent is truly an oppressor.

12. O' believers, avoid most forms of suspicion, for verily, some suspicion is sin. Neither spy on each other nor backbite. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it, so fear Allah, for verily, He is oft-forgiving, most merciful.

13. O' Mankind, verily, We have created you from a male and female and made you into peoples and tribes to know each other. Verily, the most noble of you is the most God-fearing and Allah is most knowledgeable and aware.

14. The bedouins say: "We have believed." Say to them: "You

١١- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُوا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَتِمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

١٢- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

١٣- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَىٰ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

١٤- ﴿قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُل لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِن قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ

have not yet believed.” say instead, ‘We have accepted Islam’, for true belief has not yet entered into your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, you will not lose any of your [good] deeds for verily, Allah is most forgiving and most merciful.”

15. Verily, the believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger without any doubt, and they strive with their persons in Allah’s path. These are the truthful.

16. Say: “Are you announcing to Allah about your [belief in the] religion when Allah already knows the contents of the heavens and the earth? And, Allah knows well all things!”

17. They consider their acceptance of Islam a favour to you. Say: “Do not make your Islam a favor to me. Instead it is Allah Who has done you a favour by guiding you to *Eemân* [faith] if you are earnest.”

18. Verily, Allah knows the hidden things of the heavens and the earth, and Allah sees whatever you do.

الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

١٥- ﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾﴾

١٦- ﴿قُلْ أَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾﴾

١٧- ﴿يُحْسِنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا
تَمْنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ
أَنْ هَدَيْتُكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
﴿١٧﴾﴾

١٨- ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾﴾

Tafseer of Soorah al-Hujurât (49)

Name of the Soorah

Hujurât is the plural form of the word, “*Hujrah*” which literally means “room”. The only place in the Qur’an in which the word *Hujurât* is mentioned in verse number four of this *Soorah* and it is used here to refer to the one-room houses of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives. Due to the uniqueness of the word, it was chosen as the title for the *Soorah*.

Most of the names of the *Soorahs* were not mentioned by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself and as such we can find in some recent copies of the Qur’an that the ninth *Soorah* is entitled *at-Tawbah* while it is entitled *al-Barâ’ah* in others. In fact in earlier times the *Soorah* was known by many other names; for example, it was called: *al-Fâḍihah*, *al-Bahooth*, *al-Mukhziyah*, *al-Mutheerah*, *al-Hâfirah* and *al-Munakkilah* etc.¹ This variety in the choice of names does not in any way represent contradictions or changes of names does not in any way represent contradictions or changes within the Qur’an because the majority of titles of *Soorahs* were chosen by the *Ṣaḥâbah* (Companions of the Prophet) and scholars of later generations for identification purposes. There are, however, a few *Soorahs* which the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to by titles, for example, the first chapter commonly known as *Soorah al-Fâḍihah* was referred to by the Prophet (ﷺ) as “*Fâḍihah al-Kitâb*,” “*Umm al-Kitâb*,” “*Soorah al-*

¹ Badr ad-Deen az-Zarkashi, *al-Burhân fee ‘Uloom al-Qur’an*, vol. 1, p. 269, See also Shawkânî’s *Fath al-Qadeer*, vol. 2, p. 331.

Soorahs in *Ṣalâh* as was the practice of the Prophet (ﷺ). Anas ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) one of the closest Companions of the Prophet said, «I have prayed behind the Prophet, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmân and they all began their recitation with (*al-Ḥamdu lillâhi Rabbil ‘âlameen*) without mentioning *Bismillâhir-Raḥmânir-Raḥeem*.»¹⁰

Verse 1

١ - ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَانْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

«O’ believers, do not be hasty and forward in Allah and His Messenger’s presence but instead fear Allah; for verily, Allah is Hearer and Knower.»

This *Soorah* opens with Allah’s command to the believers not to interrupt the Prophet’s conversations or obstinately contradict him. Instead, they are advised to fear Allah by being patient and to obey the Prophet (ﷺ) by following him in all their affairs. Respect for the Prophet (ﷺ) and what he had to say is portrayed as an expression of the fear of Allah because the Prophet (ﷺ) did not speak of his own accord. He was guided by Allah, the Most High; therefore, his statements and actions should be looked at as divine guidance from Allah (ﷻ). The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was the means by which Allah chose to convey His last message to mankind. This vital point was emphasized and immortalized by Allah in the following verse,

﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾ (سورة التجم: ٣-٤)

¹⁰ Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 397, hadith no. 710, Muslim, vol.1, p. 219, hadith no. 786 and Mâlik, *Muwatta*, p. 36, hadith no. 173.

«And, he [the Prophet] does not speak from his desires; verily, what he says is revelation [from God].» (Qur’an 53: 3-4)

We are required to revere the Qur’an and quietly listen to its message based on Allah’s statement:

﴿وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٢٠٤)

«When the Qur’an is being recited, listen to it attentively and be quiet...» (Qur’an 7: 204)

We are also required to revere the Prophet (ﷺ) and listen attentively to his pronouncements. Ibn ‘Abbâs, the greatest Qur’anic commentator among the *Ṣaḥâbah*, added another dimension to the meanings of this verse and similar verses by interpreting it to mean that the believers should not say anything which goes against the Qur’an and Sunnah.¹¹ Figuratively speaking, one is in Allah’s presence when he or she reads the Qur’an, and likewise when the Hadiths which described the Prophet’s Sunnah¹² are studied, one also enters into the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ). Hence “Allah and His Prophet’s presence” can be said to refer today to the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Forwardness and haste in Allah’s and His Prophet’s presence could then be interpreted to mean the making of snap judgements based on superficial reading or making unauthorized and unfounded interpretations of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Giving one’s personal opinions or cultural habits precedence over the divine commands of the Qur’an and Sunnah also represents another aspect of forwardness in Allah’s and His Prophet’s presence. Great care has to be taken when explaining the principles of Islam in order that no statements contrary to those of Allah and His Apostle are inadvertently made which may consequently lead people astray. If at

¹¹ Quoted by Ibn Katheer in *Tafseer al-Qur’an al-‘Adheem*, vol. 4, p. 315.

¹² The sayings and actions of the Prophet intended as law for all Muslims.

Verse 15

١٥ - ﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾﴾

«Verily, the believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger without any doubt, and they strive with their persons in Allah's path. These are the truthful.»

After delivering a sharp rebuke to those who wrongly claim a high level of *Eemân* (belief), for themselves Almighty God, goes on to lay down the real criterion for true belief; belief in Allah and His Messenger without a hint of doubt, and striving with one's wealth and one's self in Allah's path. These are the fundamental components of true *Eemân*. The first is a spiritual or ideological commitment; the driving force behind actions, while the second represents the highest level of practical actions necessitated by that spiritual ideology. Though the term "*Eemân*" is literally translated as belief or faith, both of which imply something mental, in Islamic terms it involves action; action of the soul-intellect and corresponding action of the body, the soul-intellect's extension in the visible world. *Eemân* is thus a combination of faith and good deeds, a spiritual action producing a corresponding physical reaction. Both components have to be there for *Eemân* to be real. For, faith without appropriate action is not real faith, but merely a verbal profession of faith. And, righteous action without faith is either an expression of hypocrisy, an accidental result whose intention was otherwise, or a worldly trade off: 'You scratch my back and I will scratch yours.' Hence, true faith can not be divorced from righteousness. This essential fact is confirmed in many Hadiths, in which the Prophet (ﷺ) linked a variety of deeds with *Eemân*. For example, it was reported that he said thrice, «I swear by Allah, he does not believe." When asked

who it was, he replied, "The one from whose harm his neighbour is not safe."»¹⁹³

On another occasion, Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported that he (ﷺ) said, «The believer is simple and generous.»¹⁹⁴

Ibn 'Umar also reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, «Modesty and faith are companions; when one is taken away, the other one follows it.»¹⁹⁵

One must also consider the previously mentioned Hadith classic: «The fornicator is not a believer while in the act of fornication, nor is the thief a true believer while stealing, nor is the wine drinker.»¹⁹⁶

In Ibn 'Abbâs' narration of this Hadith, he added,

"Nor is a murderer a believer while committing murder."

His student 'Ikrimah asked him how faith could be snatched away from one who sins. Ibn 'Abbâs replied,

"Thus (interlacing his fingers and then separating them), but if he repents, it will return thus (interlacing his fingers once again)."»¹⁹⁷

Belief has to be thrown off at least temporarily for these major sins to be committed, for such deeds can not be done in its presence. That is, those who sin enter a state of disbelief which varies in length depending on the gravity of the sin. When the evil deed is completed,

¹⁹³ Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, vol. 8, p. 28, hadith no. 45 and Muslim, vol. 1, p. 32, hadith no. 74.

¹⁹⁴ Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood, vol. 3, p. 1342, hadith no. 4772.

¹⁹⁵ Collected by al-Bayhaqi.

¹⁹⁶ Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, vol. 8, Pp. 503-504, hadith no. 763, Muslim, vol. 1, p. 39, hadith no. 104 and Abu Dawood, vol. 3, p. 1313, hadith no. 4672.

¹⁹⁷ Bukhari, vol. 8, Pp. 524-525, hadith no. 800 (B).